

VZCZCXRO9961
RR RUEHLMC
DE RUEHLM #1570/01 2690334
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 260334Z SEP 06
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4327
INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 9968
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 9433
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 6333
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 4378
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001570

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E.O 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MALDIVES: UN AGENCIES PLAN ASSISTANCE STRATEGY TO SUPPORT NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

¶1. Summary and comment: UN agencies working in the Maldives met to coordinate their collective assistance strategy for the next three years. The UN planning session demonstrated close cooperation between UN agencies and the Government of Maldives. Post's tsunami reconstruction assistance grants to the Maldives are consistent with the Infrastructure Development and Environment Management priority identified by UN agencies. End summary and comment.

UN Agencies Convene in Male'

¶2. Econoff participated by invitation in the first day of a two-day strategic planning retreat organized by the UN Resident Coordinator in the Maldives to determine the assistance priorities of all UN agencies active in the Maldives. The retreat was the middle step in an iterative draft-consult-redraft process to produce a final "Common Country Assessment" and "UN Development Assistance Framework" to guide all UN assistance to the Maldives between 2007 and 2010.

¶3. Together, the CCA and UNDAF are key parts of the UN's standardized process designed to improve coordination, reduce overlap, and ensure that UN agencies' activities support Maldives' national development priorities and its achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals. (See glossary of acronyms in para 8 for more details.)

¶4. The September 20-21 meeting in Male involved representatives of UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, ILO, ESCAP, IFRC, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and other assistance agencies (see para 8 glossary of acronyms). The EU was the only other diplomatic participant besides Embassy Colombo. Representatives of relevant Maldives ministries participated as well.

¶5. For discussion in the retreat, UN staff had prepared a draft of the Common Country Assessment identifying the main development challenges in Maldives:

- Economic Development (especially unemployment).
- Infrastructure Development and Environment Management (energy and transport, fresh water resources, natural disaster prevention).
- Social Development (especially education, health, and nutrition).

- Governance (especially political reform and engagement of civil society).

According to UNDP, these four focal areas were consistent with the areas the Maldives had identified in its proposed National Development Plan for 2007-2010, which would soon be finalized.

¶6. The Common Country Assessment draft proposed four priority programming themes for UN agencies to employ:

- Equitable Resource Allocation
- Protection and Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups
- Civil Society Empowerment
- Human Resource-Centered Governance

Comment

¶7. The UN agencies appeared to have a close working relationship with the Maldives Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Department of External Resources (DER), which coordinates all donor assistance programs. The Executive Director of the DER showed the importance he attached to the UNDAF process by attending the entire planning retreat. Post concurs with the development needs and program themes identified by the UN agencies, and notes that State and USAID tsunami reconstruction grants to the Maldives fit squarely with the

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CCA's Infrastructure Development and Environment Management priority.

Glossary of Acronyms

¶8. CCA: Common Country Assessment. "An independent assessment by the United Nations system of the development situation and critical issues facing a country, particularly in light of the declarations, goals, and plans of action agreed upon at the series of global conferences convened by the UN in the 1990s." Source: http://www.un.or.th/Joint_Activities/CCA__UNDAF/cca__undaf.html

DER: Department of External Resources.

ESCAP: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

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IFRC: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

ILO: International Labor Organization.

UNDAF: UN Development Assistance Framework. "A planning framework for the development operations of the UN system at the country level. It identifies the common objectives, common strategies of development assistance and a common timeframe for follow-up activities shared by all resident UN agencies." Source: http://www.un.or.th/Joint_Activities/CCA__UNDAF/cca__undaf.html

UNDP: UN Development Program.

UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund.

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund.

WHO: World Health Organization.

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